

CITY OF HAYWARD

AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE 02/01/00

AGENDA ITEM 5

WORK SESSION ITEM _____

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: Request to Seek Grant Funding to Hire Additional Police Officers to Serve as "School Traffic Safety Officers"

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council authorize staff to seek grant funding to hire additional police officers to serve as "School Traffic Safety Officers."

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

Based on information received from school staff, parents and members of our community we have learned that traffic safety issues in and around our schools have increased significantly. Most of our existing schools were designed decades ago, when most students walked or rode bicycles to and from school. Today most parents, for a number of reasons, choose to drive their children to and from school on a daily basis. As a result of this trend, schools and their surrounding neighborhoods are experiencing traffic problems associated with overloaded drop off areas, heavy traffic congestion and hazardous situations for those children who still walk to and from school. These problems have caused frustration for school administrators, parents, community members and the police department.

In addition to these issues there are a number of other safety concerns that our schools are facing. The Hayward Unified School District recently published a "Safety Task Force Report," which identified a number of "Major Goals" directly relating to the safety of our students. The "Major Goals" listed in the "Safety Task Force Report" are as follows:

1. Integrate safety, coping skills, anger management, and conflict resolution education at all levels.
2. Improve physical security measures at all District locations.
3. Increase security and support staff resources at all levels.
4. Establish collaborative partnerships with students, staff, parents and community to raise the level of awareness for proactive security and safety measures.

5. Upgrade all District communications infrastructure i.e., telephones, and two-way radio systems.
6. Encourage and promote community volunteers to assist in ongoing security and safety measure on all school sites.
7. Conduct annual emergency crisis drills in partnership with the City of Hayward.
8. Build upon the working relationship with the City of Hayward regarding safety and security measures in and around all school sites.

“School Traffic Safety Officers” would be able to positively impact many of the concerns outlined in the Hayward Unified School District’s report. These officers would be the focal point for improving safety and developing collaborative partnerships between students, parents, teachers, administrators and the community.

How would “School Traffic Safety Officers” Function?

The “School Traffic Safety Officers” would be assigned to the schools much the same as our existing School Resource Officers, however, since many of our traffic safety issues concern younger children there would be a stronger focus at the Elementary and Middle Schools. Optimally, this program would require six officers to serve the three public high schools, continuation school, private high school and middle schools. However, if fewer officers were approved the program could be altered according to the resources allocated.

These officers would concentrate on traffic safety issues, with a strong focus on education, enforcement. The officers would perform the following tasks:

1. Develop partnerships and facilitate meetings with parents, students, staff and neighbors to encourage problem solving for school related issues.
2. Enforcement traffic laws in and around school areas before, during and after school hours.
3. Provide highly visible patrols to serve as a deterrent to other serious crimes that might occur on campuses or in the immediate area of the schools.
4. Focus on education and provide presentations and work sessions on bicycle safety, pedestrian safety, drug and alcohol awareness, safe driving, and any other safety issues that might arise.
5. Assist school administrators with engineering issues involving parking lots, student drop off and pick up areas and high pedestrian traffic areas.

6. Facilitate the placement of warning signs around schools to deter violations by warning drivers of potentially high fines.
7. Assist the existing School Resource Officers and respond to emergencies on school property when necessary.
8. Provide enforcement on police motorcycles to increase mobility and rapid responses in and around the schools.
9. Provide guidance, instruction and safety seminars for students who are new drivers and for those who are preparing to obtain their learners permits or drivers licenses.
10. Develop a diversion program for student violators.
11. Reduce traffic accidents and promote safe driving at and around the schools.
12. Mobilize volunteers to assist with traffic and other safety issues.
13. Assist School Crossing Guards.

Where would the funding for these officers come from?

Any additional officers would be fully offset by new funding sources or additional revenue. The only possible net impact to the General Fund would be the expense to purchase and maintain enough police motorcycles to equip the number of officers added. Other funding sources would also be sought to offset these expenses.

This increase in police officer personnel would not offset our need to augment patrol staffing as directed by the City Council during the last two budget presentations. Establishing these "School Traffic Safety Officer" positions would not negatively impact existing patrol staffing. The additional officers would benefit Patrol by filling short-term patrol vacancies, thus offsetting overtime costs during staffing shortages.

The Office of Traffic Safety grant funds represents the first potential funding source. We have already been in touch with grant administrators, who have indicated that while grant funding is very competitive, Hayward seems to be in need of this type of safety program.

An increase in traffic citation revenue represents the second source of funding. In July 1998, as a result of legislative changes, the percentage of revenue going to municipalities for traffic fines increased to 90% for base fines. Subsequently revenues for FY 1998/99 increased dramatically, while the number of citations issued overall by the Department remained about the same. After the change in traffic fine apportionment, revenues increased from \$ 264,959 in FY 1997/98 to \$680,088 in FY 1998/99; an increase in excess of 250%. We expect to continue receiving this increased revenue.

Additionally, with Council approval we would like to contact our State representative to seek legislative change that would double fines in schools zones. Similar legislative changes have been implemented on State Highways construction zones. Most significantly, the doubled fines would serve as a strong deterrent and would promote safe driving in school zones. The doubled fines coupled with the fact that a larger percentage of traffic fines are now being directed to the City, would help offset the expense of additional officers.

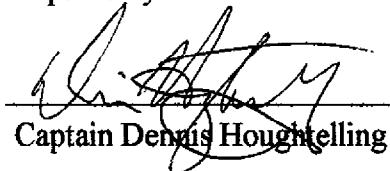
CONCLUSION:

"School Traffic Safety Officers" would become an integral part of the Police Department's Community Policing and Problem Solving. These officers would be deeply involved in responding to the needs of the schools and surrounding community and they would employ problem solving strategies to address school and neighborhood problems. The partnerships that would be developed would enable us to launch a comprehensive attack on school related traffic issues and safety concerns. The additional officers would have a positive impact on school and neighborhood traffic safety issues.

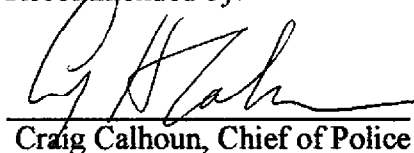
Increased fines in school zones coupled with the threat of ever present enforcement would serve as a strong deterrent and could quite possibly eliminate many of the traffic violations currently of great concern. It is recommended that the City Council permit the Police Department to seek funding to hire additional officers from grant sources and to seek legislative change to double fines for violations occurring in schools zones.

We anticipate notification from the Office of Traffic Safety prior to FY 2000/01 regarding the status of our grant application. At that time we would like to return to Council with specific information and recommendations regarding the number of officers to be hired.

Prepared by:


Captain Dennis Houghtelling

Recommended by:


Craig Calhoun, Chief of Police

Approved by:


Jesús Armas, City Manager